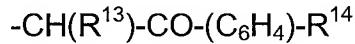


**Amendments to the Claims**

1. (Currently amended) A method of chemically ligating two oligopeptides, wherein a first oligopeptide thioester having an acidic C-terminal amino acid, said acidic C-terminal amino acid having a thioester moiety, a side chain, and a side chain protecting group selected from the group consisting of: 9-fluorenylmethyl ester, (phenylsulfonyl)ethyl ester, 2,2,2-trichloroethyl ester, and a phenacyl ester, such that said side chain protecting group substantially prevents rearrangements between atoms of said side chain and atoms of said thioester moiety, is contacted with a second oligopeptide having an N-terminal amino acid under chemical ligation conditions such that said thioester moiety of said first oligopeptide thioester ligates to said N-terminus of said second oligopeptide to form an oligopeptide or polypeptide product.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[2]] 1 wherein said side chain protecting group is a phenacyl ester having the formula:



wherein  $\text{R}^{13}$  and  $\text{R}^{14}$  are each electron-donating groups.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein  $\text{R}^{13}$  and  $\text{R}^{14}$  are each alkyl having from 1 to 3 carbon atoms.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein  $\text{R}^{13}$  is methyl or ethyl.

6. (Currently amended) The method of claim [[2]] 1 wherein said N-terminal amino acid of said second oligopeptide is cysteine or an amino acid with a removable ethylthiol moiety.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein one of said first and second oligopeptide is attached to a solid support.

8-11. (Canceled)